

State and Local Government in Louisiana: An Overview 2008-2012 Term

CHAPTER 2 — STATE GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS

Part N. Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Homeland security and emergency preparedness responsibilities were traditionally handled by the State Military Department. Effective March 1, 2006, the agency responsible for emergency preparedness and homeland security reorganized as an independent agency under the office of the governor called the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP). From September 2005 until July 2007, the agency grew from 44 permanent positions to 163 permanent positions.

GOHSEP's organizational structure consists of seven sections as follows:

- (1) Executive.
- (2) Operations.
- (3) Preparedness.
- (4) Disaster Recovery.
- (5) Support Services.
- (6) Regional Support.
- (7) Information Technology.

The mission of GOHSEP is to lead Louisiana to prepare for, prevent, respond to and recover from, all natural and manmade emergencies and disasters. GOHSEP provides leadership and support to reduce the loss of life and property through an all-hazards emergency management program of prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Operations Section

The mission of the Operations Section is to assist parishes in planning for all hazards, provide situational awareness to the parish for potential hazards, and in the event of a disaster declaration, to facilitate state and federal response efforts to support local governments.

Current initiatives include establishing an alternate emergency operations center and expanding the capabilities of WebEOC, a web-based information management system that provides a single access point for the collection and dissemination of emergency or event-related information. Future initiatives include the addition of warehouses for the Unified Logistics Element, a new Emergency Operations Center in the GOHSEP facility expansion, continued development of technology integration into Emergency Management Operations, and improving capabilities of the alternate Emergency Operations Center.

Preparedness Section

The mission of the Preparedness Section is to ensure that the state is prepared to respond to, and recover from, all natural and man-made emergencies. This section will assist local government in coordinating training and exercises, gathering intelligence, and critical infrastructure planning.

Current initiatives include planning for GOHSEP exercise activities, creating quick reference guides for managing incidents, and conducting state-sponsored training courses involving both homeland security and emergency management content. Future initiatives include continuing National Incident Management System courses for Louisiana first responders, national security and counter terrorism training in partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, development of a multi-year plan to conduct exercises in each of the nine Emergency Management Regions of the state, and conducting an annual state hurricane exercise.

Disaster Recovery Section

The mission of the Disaster Recovery section is to lead recovery efforts through effective administration of recovery and mitigation programs for the benefit of Louisiana citizens while maintaining the highest standards of customer service.

The Disaster Recovery Section is responsible for administration of Public Assistance Initiatives and Hazard Mitigation. Plans include expansion and training of staff to replace contracted employees, ensuring that all available dollars reach the state, and a proposed senior policy summit with FEMA to resolve major policy issues adversely affecting recovery. 15 permanent employees and 76 temporary full-time employees currently manage grants programs valued at \$1.5 Billion which include Road Home (\$1.1 Billion) and traditional grants (\$250 Million).

Support Services Section

Support Services is responsible for providing financial reporting, accounting, budgeting, human resources, procurement, fleet management and property control for GOHSEP.

Future initiatives include the development of a fully-funded budget capable of sustaining GOHSEP for immediate and future needs, development of an in-house reporting mechanism of financial data, and to provide additional training for agency staff and local government agencies for budgetary, procurement and financial requirements related to grants.

Regional Support Section

The Regional Support Section provides support to parish governments in regional homeland security and emergency preparedness efforts. This section ensures that all regions in the state are able to achieve a high level of preparedness for homeland security threats or natural disasters. Regional coordinators ensure that parish and regional response plans, strategies, and efforts are synchronized with the state of Louisiana and are in compliance with the National Response Plan.

Current initiatives include managing 9 regional coordinators spread across 8 different offices around the State and providing program management for the following programs: State Homeland Security Program (SHSP); Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program (LETPP); Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI); and Metropolitan Medical Response Systems (MMRS).

Information Technology Section

The mission of the Information Technology Section is to provide GOHSEP and its local, state and federal partners with a fully integrated data and voice architecture to support all preparedness, response and recovery missions.

Current initiatives include building a new technology production environment and server room and rebuilding a replicated technology environment to be located at an offsite replication center. Future initiatives include relocating the servers from the Department of Public Safety's data center to GOHSEP, reviewing, refining and upgrading existing data and voice system capabilities, and establishing a redundant backup server for the Agency phone system.

UNIFIED COMMAND

Unified Command is a team effort process, allowing all agencies with responsibility for an incident, either geographical or functional, to establish a common set of incident objectives and strategies. This is accomplished without losing or abdicating agency authority, responsibility or accountability. GOHSEP operates under the Unified Command structure during activation for all major disasters. The governor serves as the Unified Commander. The Deputy Unified Commander is the GOHSEP director. The Unified Command Group consists of the Secretary of the Department of Transportation and Development, the Superintendent of State Police, the Adjutant General, the Commissioner of Agriculture, the Secretary of Social Services, the Secretary of Public Safety, the Commissioner of Administration, the Secretary of Health and Hospitals, the Secretary of Wildlife and Fisheries, the Secretary of Environmental Quality, the Secretary of Natural Resources, the Public Service Commission, the Attorney General, and the Governor's Oil Spill Coordinator. The legislature also participates in the Unified Command through the House and Senate legislative liaisons.

